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ABSTRACT

Accomplishments made by the Allegheny Conference Educational Fund since its inception in 1978 are summarized in this report. The first section highlights progress during the 5-year history of the program, including description of a period of trust building, the initiation of specific educational programs, and school-community relationships. The next section discusses community support for the schools gained through program activities such as public information, the Reizenstein Consortium (a coalition of concerned parents and local leaders in support of various activities), the mini-grant program to teachers, partnerships in education, the educator-in-residence series, and nonprogrammatic activities. The results of the program are again summarized and the last section lists foundations and corporations that have contributed to the fund. (BJD)

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Reflections: Five Years of the Fund The Allegheny Conference Education Fund was established in 1978, with the primary goal of reducing the isolation of the Pittsburgh Public Schools from the broader community. The Fund was created as a flexible vehicle for building links between the schools and the city's business, government, civic and foundation leaders, for increasing community confidence in an urban school system and for channeling a limited pool of private dollars into a range of efforts to support the schools.

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, which initiated and administers the Fund, is a privately-supported, nonprofit organization through which leaders of Pittsburgh's major corporations work for the betterment of the city and its surrounding region. Founded in 1943, the Conference has traditionally been most active in the areas of economic development and downtown renewal.

In the five years of the Fund's existence, what has been accomplished?

Most tangibly, the Fund has raised approximately $600,000 for special initiatives in support of the schools. Staff members have also helped the district to secure an additional $750,000 by assisting the superintendent's office with contacts to appropriate local and national funding sources.

The intangibles are even more important: Support for public education is now firmly on Pittsburgh's private-sector agenda. Significant strides have also been made in improving public perceptions of the schools. Perhaps most importantly, specific program initiatives assisted through the Fund are now being augmented by broader improvements throughout the school system. (See page 11 for some specific examples.)

Some Things We've Learned Over its five-year history, the Education Fund has moved through three interrelated stages: First, a period of trust building — listening, offering help and bringing school, business and foundation leaders together to discuss common concerns. Secondly, the initiation of a range of specific programs designed to build on that trust while contributing to improvements in educational quality and in public perceptions of the district. And finally, a stage in which school-community relationships, nurtured through the Fund, have begun to spark more significant changes, with limited Fund involvement.

Here are a few of the lessons we've learned over the five-year evolution of the Fund:

□The success of the Education Fund has depended largely on its overriding strategy — in this case, building links between community leadership and the district and improving public perceptions of the schools.

□The Fund has never attempted to substitute private dollars for normal district operating expenditures such as teachers' salaries and regular text books or for the continuation of projects for which public funds have been reduced or eliminated. The idea is to complement the publicly-funded district, assisting with things it could not ordinarily do.

□While keeping overall goals in mind, it has been important to remain flexible in carrying them out. For instance, even before the Education Fund was formally created, Allegheny Conference staff members accepted the responsibility of chairing citizen task forces concerning the district's magnet schools and desegregation-reorganization plans. These activities might have been viewed as a diversion of effort but, in fact, they proved to the schools that the business community was willing to meet them at their point of need, even in a controversial context.

□Programs, even highly successful efforts like the Education Fund's Mini-Grant Program of small grants to teachers, shouldn't be seen as ends in themselves. In addition to immediately benefiting students, programs should further broader purposes such as bringing together community leaders in the service of educational improvement or enhancing public perceptions of the schools.

☐Location outside the school system has been essential to the Fund's success as an innovator, catalyst and broker. Its status as an activity of the corporate-supported Allegheny Conference on Community Development has given the Fund credibility with the foundation and business communities and has provided flexibility in funding and program initiation which complements district efforts. For instance, using private dollars, the Fund could risk introducing new programs which, if successful, could later be funded by the district as ongoing activities. Also, coming from an external source, the Fund's activity on behalf of the district has helped community members to see the schools in a new, more positive light.

☐While the Fund has gained flexibility by its independence from the system, it has always worked in close cooperation with the schools. Viewing the schools as an equal partner, the Fund has never attempted to impose programs or changes from the outside.

☐The Fund has supported good ideas whatever their source, whether community initiated, suggested by the school administration or the teachers' union, or launched by the Fund itself.

☐Heightening community awareness of the strengths of the public schools can be just as important as starting new programs. In working toward this goal, hiring communications specialists to assist with specific projects can be beneficial.

☐The Fund has sought private contributions gradually, largely on an as-needed basis. One key element of its fund-raising has been allowing individual foundations to support specific program pieces which they view as having particular importance to the overall strategy. Additionally, donation of staff time by the Allegheny Conference has facilitated fund-raising by ensuring that all contributions go directly for program or strategy initiatives.

Perhaps most importantly, five years of experience with the Allegheny Conference Education Fund has demonstrated that a flexible, independent funding vehicle, operating with clear goals and a coherent strategy, can have a significant impact on the schools and the community environment in which they operate.

Program Activities

While overall strategy has been more important than any single program, the Education Fund has built community support for the schools around a number of specific initiatives. These are briefly reviewed in the following sections of this report.

Public Information

The Education Fund has, since its creation, actively supported public information efforts as a means of building public confidence in the schools. Approximately $150,000 has been directed to this general program area.

One of the Fund's earliest initiatives provided for professional production of magnet school brochures, posters and television spots to make the community aware of programs which both furthered the goal of desegregation and improved the quality of education. As the district implemented further desegregation and reorganization changes, the Education Fund provided monies to hire staff for a phone information center and to produce radio, tv, billboard and newspaper messages announcing the center's availability.

Following up on these early activities, the Fund has continued to arrange for informal, professional counsel to the district's Division of Information Services. It has also helped the schools to publish three annual reports to the community and has provided partial funding to hire an intern to assist with magnet school publicity.

At the individual school level, the Education Fund initiated a program of small "communications grants" for the district's elementary schools and produced a "Guide for Improving School Communications" to serve as a source of ideas for parents, teachers and principals. During the one-year period in which the grants were offered, parents and staff at 21 schools formed community-relations committees and received grants averaging $200. Activities ranged from creating school brochures and slide presentations to hosting receptions for local realtors and day-care administrators.

The Fund has also developed a close working relationship with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, supporting the innovative public information and recruitment activities which the union has undertaken on behalf of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. During the period of desegregation and reorganization, for instance, the Fund covered the cost of stipends for teachers making personal welcoming telephone calls to every family at two potentially-troubled middle schools. In subsequent years, it joined with the union in funding advertising campaigns in support of the public schools, including the production of brochures, billboards and radio spots and the purchase of advertising space. Additionally, the Fund has contributed to union canvassing and student recruitment efforts in selected neighborhood areas.

Taken together, these and other public information efforts have begun the process of strengthening support for the schools among parents, staff and the community as a whole.

Reizenstein Consortium

A coalition of parents and concerned local leaders, the Consortium was formed as a community initiative with a clearly defined goal — to ensure the success of the newly-opened Reizenstein Middle School which was bringing together students from diverse racial and economic backgrounds. The Consortium supported its first several years of work through private foundation grants and limited, one-time federal assistance. The organization subsequently received funding from the Education Fund because its activities, which were gradually being expanded from Reizenstein to other middle schools, held the potential for replication throughout the system. Some of the Consortium's initiatives included:

Summer Orientation

Week-long summer day camp orientation sessions were staffed by teachers and students of the middle school. These helped new students to become acquainted with teachers, their peers and the school facility through a series of relationship and confidence-building activities.

After-School Clubs

The Consortium sponsored a range of after-school activities which helped neighborhood children and those bussed to the school become better acquainted with staff and each other and which provided further opportunities for success at the school.

Parent Programs

In addition to meetings at their elementary schools and during the summer camp program, parents were given the opportunity to attend informal sessions with middle school teachers and administrators. Also, middle school parents personally telephoned the family of each incoming sixth grader to offer a welcome, answer questions and bolster confidence in the school.

Staff Training

The Consortium provided staff training for summer and after-school programs and served as a resource to staff members on issues related to the desegregated setting and the special needs of middle school students.

Community Involvement

The Consortium developed a range of programs to involve service agencies, community organizations and citizens more directly with the school. This effort has led to a joint Community Education project on the part of the School Board, the City of Pittsburgh and the Community College of Allegheny County to increase community access to the schools and to other public facilities city-wide.

Advocacy

In its role as advocate, the Consortium helped individual parents and students to negotiate the school system, spoke out for needed programs at the school and served as a positive voice for integration.

The Education Fund supported Consortium activities for three years, paid for the publication of a guide on how to prepare for middle school in a desegregated setting and provided support for a consultant to assist with the transfer of middle school programs from the Consortium to the school district administration. Summer and after-school programs are now funded totally by the district and have been expanded to include several secondary as well as all middle schools.

Mini-Grant Program

In 1979, the Education Fund initiated a program of small grants made directly to teachers for the purpose of carrying out innovative projects with their students. Twice each year, the grants are awarded on a competitive basis by a committee which includes the superintendent of schools, the president of the local teachers' union and a broad range of business and civic leaders. Approximately $20,000 is distributed annually to Pittsburgh Public School teachers in grants averaging $400 each. Staff support to the small grants effort is donated by the Allegheny Conference.

The program builds on the energy and imagination of teachers — and the results have been remarkable. Teachers, at all grade levels and in every subject area, have responded enthusiastically to the effort as an encouragement to exceptional teaching. Funders have recognized that it puts private-sector resources into the classroom where they can have the most impact. Students have benefited directly from more than 200 innovative projects such as the following:

- A student-run cafe, used to teach math, nutrition and career alternatives.
- Special early-morning sessions in basic reading skills.
- A series of intergenerational programs which brought together elementary students and the residents of a nearby nursing home.
- Class and community activities through which ethnically diverse middle school students learn about each others' neighborhoods.

Additionally, good will generated by the small grant program and informal contact among members of the grant review committee have laid the groundwork for further cooperative efforts.

The success of the program led the Ford Foundation to fund publication of a "how to" handbook, developed by the Allegheny Conference, to help other communities start small grant efforts of their own. With assistance from a local foundation, a film describing the program has also been produced.

In 1983, the Education Fund also helped to establish a small grants program in the Woodland Hills School District, a system created by the court-ordered merger of five school districts in Allegheny County.

Partnerships in Education

The Partnerships program — a joint activity of the Allegheny Conference Education Fund, the Board of Public Education and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce — links 17 companies with individual middle and high schools. Additionally, eleven organizations, primarily nonprofit groups, participate as "associate partners" because their resources are more appropriate for use across the system than for pairing with any single school.

Each school-business pair develops its own cooperative relationship, consistent with the partners' individual needs and resources. While a business partner can sometimes provide a school with tangible benefits such as donated supplies or equipment, partnerships serve first and foremost as simple mechanisms for bringing the "outside" world directly into contact with principals, teachers and students themselves. This outside contact means a broader audience for positive school efforts, an exchange of new ideas, a better understanding of other viewpoints and the chance to be better understood. The program often provides students with their only opportunity for exposure to workworld expectations and options; so a partnership can lead to increased motivation to stay in school and to more meaningful career choices.

Here is a sampling of activities undertaken by three school-business partnerships:

☐ *High School/Primary Metals Corporation* A program linking gifted students with mentors in career-interest areas at the company; an annual career day; a joint school/company choir concert, taped for cable tv broadcast; summer hiring of a teacher at the company's technical center; donation of used periodicals to build a school technical library; teacher "shadow days."

☐ *High School with Computer Magnet/Electronics Corporation* Tours of a manufacturing plant, media center and computerized drafting department; company training, such as a Communications Skills Workshop, offered to teachers; donation of a one-year computer lease plus a ton of surplus paper; student internships and shadow days; employee participation as judges at an inter-school "Superbowl of Problem Solving."

☐ *Health Magnet School/Health Insurance Carrier* Assistance with curriculum development; donation of training films; student internship in the public relations department; arrangements for physicians and medical technicians to speak at the school.

Partnerships typically begin with small, visible projects such as concerts or exhibits, then gradually grow to encompass more substantive, ongoing activities. Over time, the many cooperative efforts undertaken through a partnership can contribute significantly to the educational environment at a school.

Educator-in-Residence Series

Beginning with initial meetings to bring school, business and foundation representatives together, the Education Fund has attempted to involve community leaders in the discussion of critical issues facing public education. This process has been continued through a series of one-day residencies by nationally-prominent figures in the field of education.

Issues such as school desegregation, means of improving the image of the public schools, the relationship of higher education to the secondary schools, and strategies for improving low-achieving schools are among those discussed in the course of large and small meetings connected with the residencies. In each instance, school representatives, college and university educators, union officials, members of the business and foundation communities, and other civic leaders have been asked to attend as warranted by the topic.

Speakers brought to Pittsburgh for these sessions have included: Ann Barkelew, Public Information Officer of the Los Angeles Public Schools; Dan Bagin, school-community relations consultant; Ernest Boyer, former U.S. Commissioner of Education; Ronald Edmunds, "effective schools" advocate; Edward Meade, Chief Program Officer of the Ford Foundation; Robert Wilburn, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education; and Robert Wood, former Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools.

Over its four years of existence, the Educator-in-Residence program has involved only about $12,000 in direct expenses, yet it has played an extremely vital role in Education Fund strategy. The program has been an important means of raising issues related to public education, involving key individuals and creating a consensus for local action.

Beyond Programmatic Activities

Not all of the Fund's efforts have been directed toward specific program areas. Some of its most important work has been in the capacity of broker and informal advisor. The following examples give some indication of the range of non-programmatic initiatives undertaken through the Fund:

Advisory Committees

Staff members have served on and chaired advisory committees concerned with a host of issues, including desegregation, magnet schools, communications and vocational education. The Fund has also provided the superintendent's office with recommendations for and access to business representatives for service on various committees.

Public School Advocacy

Representatives of the Fund have spoken actively in support of the public schools, both informally with Pittsburgh's civic leaders and in formal speaking engagements.

Discretionary Funding

Small, ad hoc grants have been important in assisting the school superintendent and advancing Education Fund strategy. For instance, the Fund has hosted luncheons to bring together key individuals and has provided the superintendent with funds to cover some costs of monthly principals' meetings. Additionally, the Fund has provided money to assist a citizens' interest group, the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education, in publishing and more broadly distributing its newsletter.

Special Events

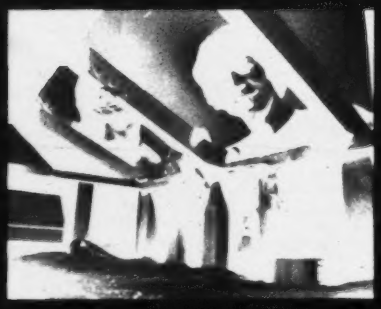
The Fund and corporate contributors contacted by its staff have hosted numerous special events such as a luncheon at the conclusion of elementary school accreditation and receptions to honor Mini-Grant teachers and Partnerships in Education coordinators. These events provide opportunities to demonstrate business good will for the schools and to encourage contact between teachers, administrators and members of Pittsburgh's business and foundation communities.

Access to Funding Sources

In addition to its own direct grants, the Fund has helped the district to secure an additional $750,000 by assisting the superintendent's office with contacts to appropriate funding sources. These grants have furthered a number of major educational initiatives and suggest how far the schools have come in earning the trust and respect of local and national funders. Some notable examples include:

- $450,000 to fund achievement-monitoring initiatives in reading, math and critical thinking.
- $120,000 in support of the Schenley Teacher Center which will serve as the focal point for the district's staff development efforts.
- $110,000 to assist in the development of a management information system for the district, including student information, personnel information, and school-based budget components.

Recent developments in the area of arts-in-education are typical of the role the Fund is now able to play on behalf of the schools. Early discussions between Fund staff members and interested community leaders resulted in the formation of an ad hoc arts-in-education committee. The committee commissioned a brief review of the district's existing arts programs and published a directory of community arts resources for distribution to every teacher in the system. Having completed these activities, the committee expanded its membership and approached the School Board with the offer of raising private funds to support a consultant for one year to develop a comprehensive plan for increasing the effectiveness of the district's many but fragmented arts offerings. With funding and strong leadership from the local community foundation, the final report has been completed and the School Board has hired a full-time arts coordinator to implement the plan.



Results Results of the Allegheny Conference Education Fund's five years of activity are enumerated throughout this report — direct benefits to students and staff through specific programs, improved public perceptions of the schools, expanded school relationships with the foundation and business communities, and major educational initiatives undertaken with private support.

Still another result of the Fund's activity has been the experience gained in fostering school-community cooperation. This experience, coupled with growing national attention to the needs of the public schools, has led to the creation of a national grant-making organization headquartered in Pittsburgh, called the Public Education Fund. Over a five-year period beginning in 1983, this organization will provide partial funding and technical assistance to encourage the development of local education funds in more than 50 communities across the country, particularly in urban areas.

For additional information about the Allegheny Conference Education Fund or the national Public Education Fund, write or call:

David Bergholz, Assistant Executive Director
Allegheny Conference on Community Development
600 Grant Street, Suite 4444
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 281-1890

Contributors The following foundations and corporations have generously contributed to the Allegheny Conference Education Fund:

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Allegheny Conference
on Community Development
600 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412/281-1890